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## NPS, DLIFLC collaborate to educate FAOs service-wide

By Kate Lamar

Naval Postgraduate School

A new Joint FAO Skill Sustainment Program (JFSSPP) at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) is bringing practicing Foreign Area Officers (FAOs) back to Monterey for a refresher course on cultural, linguistic and regional knowledge, as well as policy and strategy analysis.



Col. Mark Chakwin speaks to Foreign Area Officers about the new Joint FAO Skill Sustainment Program during a conference Feb. 11, at the Presidio of Monterey.

In cooperation with the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC), NPS has added a language component to the program and has designed the new JFSSPP to build upon the existing graduate degree program in the department of National Security Affairs.

"It is critical that our FAOs expand upon their regional, strategic and analytic knowledge gained at NPS, to include language fluency and culture," said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Jim McMullin, program officer for the National Security Affairs Department at NPS.

DLIFLC's role includes providing instructors for the resident language and cultural familiarization week-long program, as well as a critical distance learning piece, whereby FAOs undertake a 12-week online course, which will help them brush up on their language prior to the advanced language training at NPS.

"The approach we take during the resident course is to foster discussion and debate on strategic topical areas in

the target language," said DLIFLC Assistant Provost for Continuing Education, Marine Lt. Col. Bob Lucius. "Since we have limited direct contact time with the FAOs, we focus on high-level language skills."

The non-credit short courses, designed to ensure FAOs in the field stay current on regional knowledge and language skills, are critical, given FAO mission requirements.

"The Foreign Area Officers are the officers who are expected to be regional experts, to have a high level of language skill, to be able to engage in military-to-military diplomacy and to operationally advance U.S. interests where ever they are," said DLIFLC Commandant Army Col. Sue Ann Sandusky, who is also a Sub-Saharan Africa FAO.

"The FAO may be the only Department of Defense representative in a country," Sandusky said. "It is on his or her shoulders that our bilateral relationships are really hinging."

These resident courses are supplemented by an exciting new web portal called FAOweb. The portal, released in February, will provide distance learning and community networking for FAOs worldwide. A cutting-edge example of Web 2.0 technology, FAOweb will expand and adapt in coming years as courses and language resources are developed by professors at NPS, DLIFLC, and FAOs themselves.

"Currently FAOweb contains the legacy DLI products organized by language," Lucius said. "We are working on developing advanced modules on topics geared specifically to FAOs. The current materials are intended for beginner language acquisition and sustainment. The new modules, which should be ready by this summer, will be for more advanced learning and will focus on the strategic-level at which FAOs operate."

The first iteration of the program began in September 2009, focusing on Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union. It brought together seasoned FAOs from Eurasia for a week of professional seminars at NPS, followed by another week of regional security seminars in Germany at the NATO School in Oberammergau, the Marshall European Center for Security Studies and the United States European Command (EUCOM) in Stuttgart.

The second iteration of the course this spring focused on Latin America. FAOs from across the Americas came to Monterey for a week of professional education and refresher language training, followed by an additional week of regional studies in Lima, Peru.

For more information about the new FAO program at NPS or to request access to FAOweb, please visit their website at <http://fao.nps.edu>. ♦